

**RHODE ISLAND MAYORAL ACADEMY<sup>SM</sup>  
BLACKSTONE VALLEY**

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
MINUTES**

**5:30 p.m., March 19, 2012**

**Blackstone Valley Prep Elementary Cafetorium**

**291 Broad Street, Cumberland**

Board Members Present:

Chairman Dan McKee

\*Joe Almond

\*Angelo Garcia

John Morton

Stephanie Noris

Ken Vaudreuil

*\*Exited meeting prior to adjournment as noted in the minutes below.*

Also present were Executive Director Jeremy Chiappetta, Secretary Daniel Waugh, Financial Consultant Ralph Salvatore, BVP Team Members Michael DeMatteo, Jen LoPiccolo, Lori McEwen, Colleen Colarusso; RIMA Team Members Drew Allsopp, and David Lauck; and community members Lindsey Tavares and Spencer Dickinson

**Meeting Called to order at 5:35PM by Mr. Dan McKee**

**1. Motion to approve January and February meeting minutes was made by Ken Vaudreuil and seconded by Stephanie Noris.**

**The motion passed on the following vote:**

**AYE: Almond, Garcia, McKee, Morton, Noris, Vaudreuil. NAY: None.**

**2. BVP Mayoral Academy Monthly Financial Update by Ralph Salvatore from financials dates February 29, 2012. Ralph shared the following updates:**

- Holding the budget in those lines is the goal for the remainder of the fiscal year
- On target to a projected surplus of \$531,672.
- Projected surplus of in supplies largely due to when the budget is approved versus when these items are purchased

Dan McKee opened it up to questions at which time he asked a clarifying question to further understand the revenue with regard to the tuition from sending districts and whether any districts are lingering behind. Jeremy reiterated that one district was 30 days outstanding but they had communicated that it was a cash flow issue and then further communication last Friday was that a check was in the mail.

Dan McKee asked whether the board needs to think about the next budget (FY12) and whether a Capital reserve line item should be included to which Ralph indicated that the surplus remaining from this year's budget could potentially be restricted to capital or go with a percentage from the surplus.

Ralph Salvatore concluded by sharing that a draft of the audit is scheduled for Friday, March 23 and will be able to discuss a final audit at the next meeting.

Dan McKee then asked about the audit and what needed to be put into place to ensure a December 31<sup>st</sup> completion of next year's budget. Ralph clarified that this year we did apply for an extension and was not allowed. Ralph also shared that there will be a list of recommendations coming out of this audit; these will be mostly around fixed assets, depreciation and documentation for all of this.

### 3. Vote to Approve the Head of School to Elementary School 1

Jeremy recommended Lindsey Tavares to the board for his successor as Head of School for ES1. Highlights shared about Ms. Tavares's professional career include former NY teaching fellows, AmeriCorps member and taught in rural Washington. Tavares now works for The New Teacher Project partnering with PPSD on their human capital strategy.

Jeremy included that the decision to recommend Ms. Tavares was made after an authentic interview process that included a full day to observe, coach, meet with the Executive Assistant and co-chairs of the FLC as well as meet with board members Stephanie Noris and Angelo Garcia. Stephanie Noris spoke to how impressed she was from her conversation with Lindsey and Angelo Garcia echoed this sentiment. He included that she had a passion for teaching.

Dan McKee asked about Ms. Tavares' start date to which Jeremy said tentatively it's scheduled for April 1. Lindsey shared that she has been on site as much as possible since beginning the process. Jeremy mentioned that Dr. Lori McEwen also joined the team as Director of Academics. Lori McEwen spoke briefly about the experience her first two weeks as overwhelmingly positive and she's excited to be part of the BVP team.

**Motion to accept the recommendation to appoint Lindsey Tavares as Head of Elementary School 1 was made by Joe Almond and seconded by John Morton.**

**The motion passed on the following vote:**

**AYE: Almond, Garcia, McKee, Morton, Noris, Vaudreuil. NAY: None.**

4. Vote to Direct the Executive Director to Present to the Board a Comprehensive Policy Manual on or Before September 2012 Board Meeting.

Jeremy Chiappetta reiterated that as was discussed at February's board meeting, this motion is in response to questions and recommendations to create a more comprehensive system by which to catalogue policies, particularly as we grow as an organization. Joe Almond's comments at the last meeting, reiterated again, included, "How are we instituting and documenting the policies themselves? What are we doing to memorialize these policies for both the staff and the board?"

Joe Almond reiterated that he has spoken with Jeremy and met with him about the policies offering some advice about the need and possible approaches.

Dan McKee asked what the intent was for this process to which Jeremy Chiappetta said that the development of these processes and to bring before the board, ideally in August with a draft, and then in September with a formal vote and final.

Angelo Garcia asked whether the idea that this would replace what is in place to which Jeremy stated that it would be a way to keep a comprehensive omnibus. The rationale comes from the requests made for BVP to show that there are policies and further illustrate the fiscal health of this organization.

**Motion to direct the Executive Director to present to the Board a Comprehensive Policy Manual on or Before September 2012 board meeting was made by Ken Vaudreuil seconded by John Morton.**

**The motion passed on the following vote:**

**AYE: Almond, Garcia, McKee, Morton, Noris, Vaudreuil. NAY: None.**

5. Vote to Authorize the Executive Director to Create Interim Policies for Issues Pursuant to School Finance and Operations.

Jeremy Chiappetta clarified the rationale for this vote which will:

- Allow Executive Director to conduct appropriate business in preparation for a site visits pursuant to federal and state grants (Charter School Program Grants)

- Demonstrate the intent of the board to formalize the “best business practices” already in place at BVP while allowing the team sufficient time to meet the request

John Morton asked what the policy is for review for interim policies that might be created. John Morton asked that those be reported to the board to which Jeremy suggested that he could add it to the Executive Director’s report. Angelo Garcia suggested that perhaps there is a standing policy committee that might be created to which Dan McKee agreed.

**Motion to authorize the Executive Director to create interim policies for issues pursuant to School Finance and Operations made by John Morton and seconded by Ken Vaudreuil.**

**The motion passed on the following vote:**

**AYE: Almond, Garcia, McKee, Morton, Noris, Vaudreuil. NAY: None.**

## 6. Executive Director’s Report

### **a. Status of Schools Update**

#### *Attendance:*

Number of School Days: 118

Number of Scholars Currently Enrolled: 521

Elementary 1: 241

Elementary 2: 79

Middle School: 201

#### Attendance

Network-wide Attendance Average: 97.5%

Elementary 1: 97.3%

Elementary 2: 98.0%

Middle School: 97.2%

Number of students with perfect attendance: 132 scholars (25%)

#### Tardies/On-Time Attendance

Network-wide On-Time Attendance Average: 98.0%

#### \*Chronic Absence

Network-wide Chronic Absence (%): 3.3%

Elementary 1: 3.3%

Elementary School 2: 3.7%

Middle School: 3.0%

Number of Scholars with 11+ absences: 17 scholars

*\*Chronic Absence is defined by RIDE as the number of students who have been absent 10% or more of days enrolled; at 118 school days, that is anyone with more than 10 absences*

*Professional Development:*

18 Members of ES1, ES2, MS, and the network team participated in a learning tour of several high performing schools in Denver, Colorado over the February break. In addition to seeing some exceptional schools, including public turnaround Pioneer, charters West Denver Prep, Denver School for Science and Technology, and University Prep, the team met with State Senator Michael Johnston, a former HS principal and TFA Corps Member, and a few of us also had the opportunity to sit with leadership from the Charter School Growth Fund for an initial meeting exploring a potential partnership with them.

*ES1 Report:*

ES1 has finished the second academic Trimester of the year! Family attendance during last week's family-teacher conferences was high with 95% of ES1 families participating. This was a time dedicated to conversations regarding scholars' academic progress. Those families who were unable to attend will have make-up conferences schedule over the next week. Several conferences for video recorded for use during PD sessions for this coming school year.

*ES2 Report:*

ES2 has finished the second academic Trimester of the year! Family attendance during last week's family-teacher conferences was high with 97% of ES2 families participating. This was a time dedicated to conversations regarding scholars' academic progress. Those families who were unable to attend will have make-up conferences schedule over the next week.

Additionally, ES2 also enrolled 3 new scholars off of the wait-list following the February vacation. We are excited to welcome these scholars into the Blackstone Valley Prep family!

*MS Report:*

Middle school scholars have completed a third round of reading assessments using the Fountas and Pinnell leveling system. Since the last testing round in December, scholars posted an average of 2 levels' growth, equating to two-thirds of a year growth in the span of 3 months. At this point, 96% of fifth grade scholars and 86% of sixth grade scholars are on track to be at or above grade level in reading by June.

The sixth grade boys and girls basketball teams wrapped up their inaugural seasons on March 7. Approximately 30 scholars participated in our basketball program, led by Coaches Laskowski, Chatterjee, and Mohnk. The teams competed against other charter

and independent schools, such as Learning Community, Paul Cuffee, Wheeler, and Gordon School. While the win/loss record is not as exciting as other BVP data, the opportunity for scholar-athletes to develop skills, teamwork, and sportsmanship was especially valuable.

### **b. Staffing Update**

BVP recently hired Dr. Lori McEwen as our Director of Academics, overseeing our teaching and learning, curriculum, teacher evaluation, and professional development K-12. Lori comes to BVP with a wide range of experience including educational consulting, school leadership, and teaching at the college level.

BVP has built a strong teacher talent pipeline of local and national educators who are committed to putting 100% of our scholars on a path to college. We are poised to launch a partnership with Rhode Island College to pilot year-round student teaching in the elementary school. Finally, BVP continues its partnership with Teach for America and has had several strong candidates apply for elementary and middle school positions.

In total, 96% of current BVP teachers invited to return have signed agreement letters to return for 2012-2013. Those invited to return who have declined are 2<sup>nd</sup> year TFA Corps Members who have finished their commitment and are either pursuing graduate school or moving out of state.

### **c. Lottery Update**

Having launched an online and paper application in early November, **BVP had 1547 applications for enrollment for 2012-2013.** Our lottery was conducted earlier today, and the results of the lottery are as follows. The total of accepted scholars is 171 K, 81 5<sup>th</sup>, 8 1<sup>st</sup>, 4 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 4 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, for a total of 268 scholars. We created waiting lists for all grades and will enroll as seats become available. Letters were mailed to all admitted families today and waitlist letters will be mailed tomorrow. Demographics of the newly admitted scholars are:

Siblings:     **77 siblings** of current families admitted (28.7% of all applicants admitted)

Poverty:     **70.9% overall**; 95% CF, 56% CU, 42% LN, 78% PA

Town:        75 CF (28%), 74 CU (28%), 45 LN (17%), 74 PA (27.6%)

Jeremy spoke to lottery and noted that there are families with 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade scholar siblings that are on the waiting list. With no seats available, there are not seats to give them preference at this time. At our current entry grades of K and 5<sup>th</sup> grade siblings, many siblings admitted.

John Morton wondered whether we intend to ever take new applications from grades 9-12. Jeremy reiterated that at this time we do we intend to ever take applications at those grade levels.

Lastly, BVP is holding enrollment celebrations for new families on March 27, 2012 at the following locations and times:

- 5:30PM ES2 – Fatima Hall
- 6:30PM ES1 – 291 Broad Street
- 7PM MS – Fatima Hall

#### **d. District-charter Compact**

The pursuit of a Gates' Funded Compact has ended unsuccessfully. We submitted a proposal for a \$2-4MM plan to collaborate on a number of projects; however we did not advance in the application process. Even so, we may still be eligible for Gates' supported facilities work to expand high-quality seats for the region.

Blackstone Valley Prep continues to meet with other districts and charters to explore various partnership opportunities, ranging from operational to educational sharing of services and professional development opportunities.

#### **e. Facility Update**

In partnership with RIMA, BVP continues to make investments in our current sites and prepare for short and long-term solutions. At present, there are clear intentions to present to the BVP board real estate contracts for 2012-2013 and beyond.

#### **f. Other**

Blackstone Academy Charter School for the Arts, a high school in Pawtucket, has formally asked that we change our name based real and perceived confusion between our organizations.

There was some discussion raised on this matter:

Angelo Garcia asked what the process would be for the board as it is important for this board not to address. Jeremy Chiappetta agreed that currently even after more than 2 hours of continued dialogue, it has not been the intent at all. Stephanie Noris asked about our name and reiterated that many refer to us as "BVP" which is different from "Blackstone..."

Stephanie Noris asked how they have measured their concern to which Jeremy reiterated that one way was the volume of calls they are receiving during this busy time

of student and teacher recruitment. Stephanie Noris asked whether there was a plan proposed. John Morton asked what suggestions were offered by Blackstone Academy to which Dan asked what the pleasure of the board is around this concern.

Dan McKee did reiterate that to this point there have been no other ideas brought forth by Blackstone Academy. We have our own branding concerns around ensuring that Mayoral Academy is present in our name and we continue to work on that piece which will also help to build more awareness that we are separate organizations.

Angelo Garcia suggested that reaching out to the school is a first good step, both formally and informally and also signals to RIDE that we are working on it. Stephanie Noris agreed that being willing to find a solution is the first step.

The board directed Jeremy to issue a formal invitation to Blackstone Academy Charter School to attend a meeting.

***Note: Joe Almond exited the board meeting following the Executive Director's report and before moving into Executive Session.***

7. Motion made by Ken Vaudreuil and seconded by Angelo Garcia to move into Executive Session for issues pursuant to the following R.I. General Law:

- a. Personnel – R.I. Gen. L § 42-46-5(a)(1)
- b. Acquisition or lease of real estate – R.I. Gen. L. § 42-46-5(a)(5)
- c. Relating to Litigation – R.I. Gen. L. § 42-46-5(a)(2)

**The motion passed on the following vote:**

**AYE: Garcia, McKee, Morton, Noris, Vaudreuil. NAY: None.**

\*\*\* EXECUTIVE SESSION \*\*\*

**Motion to come out of Executive Session by Ken Vaudreuil and seconded by John Morton. The motion passed on the following vote:**

**AYE: McKee, Vaudreuil, Morton, Noris. NAY: None.**

***Note: Angelo Garcia exited the board meeting during Executive Session and was not present for this vote or moving forward.***

Dan McKee shared publicly that Angelo Garcia was present for the discussion but not at the time of coming out of Executive Session.

McKee also made public the resolution that was made to restructure the lease. It is as follows:

- (a) to amend the rental paid under the Lease to take into account those amounts due under the proposed refinancing mortgage loan with Self Help which rent shall not exceed \$273,588.00 annually, and which rent shall be pegged to the debt service payment due on the proposed loan from Self Help;
- (b) to add to the definition of Leased Premises under the Lease a three story proposed addition of 1,300 square feet, more or less, the drawings of which shall be reviewed and approved by Blackstone Valley Prep;
- (c) to provide in the Lease an option to purchase the School in favor of Blackstone Valley Prep for an amount equal to the funds invested by RIMA in the School, both equity and debt, but provided, however that Blackstone Valley Prep shall have the benefit of any amortization of principal on any loan or loans, the repayment of which is secured by the School and the option shall not be exercisable until the lapse of seven (7) years from the date of the closing of the Self Help loan. This subject to receipt of a letter from RIMA setting forth the amount of equity in this building on this date;
- (d) to amend the Lease to provide for a lease term maturing fifteen (15) years from the date of the Self Help loan closing; and
- (e) that Blackstone Valley Prep agrees to enter into such agreements with Rhode Island Mayoral Academies or its special purpose entity affiliate to which the School is transferred in order to facilitate the making of the loan by Self Help including such agreements as will not adversely and materially affect the monetary obligations of Blackstone Valley Prep including, but not limited to, agreements with respect to furnishing copies of all reports, notices, evaluations concerning operating budgets, financial condition, enrollment counts and related educational performance reports as are permitted under law to be shared with Self Help.

**Motion to seal the Executive Session Minutes by Stephanie Noris and seconded by John Morton. The motion passed on the following vote:**

**AYE: McKee, Vaudreuil, Morton, Noris. NAY: None.**

8. Public Comment – None Present

**9. Motion to adjourn by John Morton and seconded by Stephanie Noris. Meeting was adjourned at 8:30PM. The motion passed on the following vote:**

**AYE: McKee, Vaudreuil, Morton, Noris. NAY: None.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Jen LoPiccolo

Assistant Secretary